

LITERATURE CITED

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BIRD DISPLAY. AN INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF BIRD PSYCHOLOGY. By Edward A. ARMSTRONG. Cambridge at the University Press; Macmillan Co., N.Y. 1942: 5½ x 8½ in., xvi + 381 pp., 22 pls. \$5.50.

The study of bird psychology has only recently emerged from its anecdotal, anthropomorphic stage, and this excellent handbook will probably surprise many students, who, because the literature has been so extremely scattered, have not realized the extent of the progress we have made. Armstrong has not only assembled, correlated, and interpreted this literature, but has wisely included the full references which provide the evidence for his statements. If we question a generalization, we can promptly turn to the original sources and form our own conclusions.

The author's fine admonition to students of bird behavior demands quotation in full:

"An interesting observation of a bird's behaviour should be no less carefully recorded and reverently preserved than the type specimen of a new subspecies. Lack of regard for this principle has long prevented the outdoor study of birds from being considered much more than the harmless hobby of men who preferred looking at birds to killing them. Now that field ornithology is increasingly recognised to be a serious scientific discipline from which careless observation and wanton generalisation should be sternly excluded, it is essential that its literature should eschew the vagueness which has hampered the progress of bird-behaviour studies in the past. It is not enough to be told that birds do this or that; we should be told what reliable observer has seen them do it."

This book contains such a profusion of quotations from many sources that inevitably some will be criticized by any reader. There is, for example, the description of the dance of the Sharp-tailed Grouse (p. 73), which is based on a long out-dated, and in part anthropomorphic, account, and to which Armstrong adds a probably erroneous statement. One even turns up (p. 13) the old misconception of birds sleeping with the head under the wing. But perhaps the worst example is the quotation in full (p. 185) from a recent best-selling novel (!) of an apparently imaginary description of the dance of the Whooping Crane.

The book is handsomely illustrated with 40 photographs by the author and others. There is a bibliography of nearly 700 titles, a good index, and a separate list of the scientific equivalents of all bird names used in the text.—J. Van Tyne.